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HUMAN NATURE AND ITS REMAKING¹

Under the foregoing alluring title Professor Hocking has put in book form an expansion of the lectures which he gave on the Nathaniel W. Taylor Foundation at Yale in 1916. Christianity, in its doctrine of regeneration, has always maintained that a radical change of man's "nature" may be brought about. The specific sacramental or mystical means by which this transformation was declared to be effected have been subjects of theological debate and psychological criticism; but Christianity's mission is one of proclaiming and helping to effect alterations for the better in man's ways of life. To have this undertaking discussed by a philosopher rather than by a theologian is a promising procedure, and those who have to do with the Christian message will turn hopefully to this book.

It is confessedly a series of suggestive inquiries rather than a finished doctrine. In this lies its value—and its defect. The reader is constantly annoyed by short and often scrappy chapters, and by apparently inconclusive observations. The present reviewer has been unable to determine whether the closing paragraph is satire or an advocacy of a somewhat cautious belief in "values," without regard to their metaphysical support. Nevertheless the direction taken by Professor Hocking's inquiry is highly suggestive and ought to provoke much fruitful thinking.

It belongs to the "nature" of man—so runs the argument—to *remake* his way of living. While the animals rest content with the activities of their innate instincts, man's specific characteristic is the use of creative thought, with its inventions and its development of civilization. Hocking contends that human instincts have no such highly specialized muscular organisms as are found in the lower species. The same organism serves more than one instinct. Hence there is possible a "transmutation" of instincts so as to form a moral character capable of self-control. The "will to power," which is the central passion of man, may be so educated as to substitute control through ideals for mere brute supremacy.

Sin is the failure to interpret instincts in the interests of this "remaking" of life. The proper development of life consists in bringing so clearly to consciousness the harmful effects of such uncorrelated indulgence in instinctive behavior that the individual will be led to love a different ideal and reshape his conduct. Christianity offers as the supreme means of transforming men the possibility of participation in

¹*Human Nature and Its Remaking.* By William Ernest Hocking. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1918. xxvi+434 pages. \$3.00.

the divine life, and stresses the fact of "the divine aggression," in which God takes the initiative in empowering men.

It is through some such combination of practical analysis with mystic faith that the victory for idealism must be won. Our theologies have been, as a rule, too mystical and vague, and our ethics too analytic and rationalistic. To know exactly the facts concerning innate instincts and concerning human education, and to link these facts with an emotional power is to render a great service. In spite of its somewhat fragmentary character and the baffling vagueness of its religious mysticism, this book will stimulate thinking in a distinctly wholesome way.

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REINTERPRETATIONS OF CHRISTIANITY

In a recent book on the "new orthodoxy"¹ the author remarks that certain vital motives growing out of modern scholarship have contributed to "remarkable activity in the restatement of traditional faiths." The Great War too has provoked new discussion of some of the doctrines of Christianity.

No earnestness in the reaffirmation of the conventional views can satisfy those who are really awake to the problems and outlook of these days.

A new world of thought and ideals has arisen. Religion has taken its place in this new order, not as something aloof, but as something organic and integral with all other vital interests. All who truly dwell in this new world of the natural and the social sciences have certain attitudes and habits of thought in common. These constitute the new orthodoxy of method and spirit.

The author believes that there is "reasonable hope that the great historic development of religion represented by Christianity is destined to come to a new birth of power." The first stage of Christianity exhibited "a tremendously vital impulse to a higher, freer, moral life among informal intimate groups"; the second stage was organized Catholicism; the third stage was the Protestant Reformation.

It is not impossible that future historians will regard Protestantism as coming to its close with the end of the nineteenth century as a vital, ascending type of religion. In that century several of the most characteristic principles of Protestantism were undermined by a larger knowledge of history and science. Protestantism was individualistic; the new order is social. It assumed the

¹ *The New Orthodoxy*. By Edward Scribner Ames. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1918 ix+127 pages. \$1.00.